

coulee region

women

**CRW Staff Thanks You
for 10 Years of Sharing Your Stories**

Curiosities Issue

A Modern-Day Mortician
When Work's a Party
Chocolate: A Love Story
10 Beaches to Dream On

Complimentary
DECEMBER/JANUARY 2012
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Kristen

How can my teeth cause pain in my jaw joint?

Each jaw joint is like a ball and socket. When this joint functions properly, a thin cartilage disc moves smoothly between the ball and socket. This thin disc acts like a cushion allowing the TMJ joint to move smoothly. Each disc is held in place and guided by a muscle. If your bite is not right, the joint is actually pulled out of alignment and usually the disc is pulled forward. Since the disc is no longer acting like a cushion, the joint itself now rubs against the bony socket. Mild displacement causes popping/clicking noises in the joint and more severe displacement causes pain and eventual permanent damage to the joint.

So an unstable bite can cause jaw joint displacement, muscle strain and pain. When the jaw joint is displaced for an extended time, the body begins to compensate and adapt by involving the muscles of the neck, back, and often the arms, pelvis, and legs.

What treatment is available?

Every person has a unique jaw and muscle physiology and treatment varies since it involves the teeth, muscles and jaw joints but usually treatment involves several phases. The immediate primary goal is to relieve the muscle spasm and pain. Secondly, Dr Jon must correct the way your teeth fit together so a precision appliance (known as an orthotic) is worn over the teeth until the bite is stabilized.

Since most pain comes from injured or unhealthy muscles, muscle function normalization greatly reduces pain. When the rest position is correctly identified, appliance therapy can rapidly reduce the TMJ symptoms.

When your bite is stable, the teeth, muscles and joints all work together without any strain. The orthotic then becomes the guide for permanent stabilization procedures which can include orthodontics (braces) or prosthetic dentistry (crowns and bridges).

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Pictured on cover and above:

Diane Raalum, Betty Christiansen, Sandy Clark, Claire Ristow-Seib, Carol Schank, Renee Chrz. Photos taken at Grand River Station, La Crosse. Photo by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

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Some years ago, I had the good fortune of studying with the author Susan Orlean, who then was best known for her nonfiction book *The Orchid Thief*. She was very funny and very smart, and she gave me a piece of writing advice, succinctly summed up in two words, that inspires me every day: Who knew?

Orlean's favorite source of writing ideas was small-town newspapers. She'd page past the front page, past the international news and opinion to the tiny local gems hidden deep inside. It was in a Florida fish wrapper, for instance, that she found the short paragraph detailing the sentencing of a man arrested for poaching orchids out of the Okefenokee Swamp. *Who knew anyone would do that?* she wondered. *Who knew it was even a crime?* And she packed her bags for Florida, to research what would become *The Orchid Thief*. Who knew?

Those two words have served me well, especially as I sit down with our staff to plan each issue of *Coulee Region Women*. Who knew, for example, that women in our area volunteered as fire fighters? Or that a small, quiet woman in Houston, Minn., ran away from her Belgian home at 16 to spy on Nazi

forces? Who knew that the unassuming woman next door was behind a beloved local charity, or had changed the lives of countless students, or had survived breast cancer, or had done any other number of everyday, amazing things? Who knew?

We at *Coulee Region Women*—now celebrating our 10th year of asking “Who knew?”—indulged ourselves with that question in our “Curiosities” issue. Here, we sought to uncover obscure tidbits about our community that might pique your curiosity, and—who knows?—perhaps inspire some more investigation and delight. We found, for example, a young woman mortician who blows away the stereotype, women who make a living from home parties and an easy way to improve your health while having a good time. We expose La Crosse's longtime love affair with chocolate, offer a peek into the painstakingly restored Mons Anderson house and invite you to lounge on the 10 best beaches we've found.

Mostly, we sought to line up a fun, celebratory issue with which to thank you for 10 years—of readership, of community, of feedback and ideas. It's you who keep us on our toes, excited about the next planning meeting and the wonderful women we'll feature. It's you who feed our ever-growing database of ideas; it's you who stun and amaze us; it's you who make us feel so very lucky to have the jobs we do.

We're looking forward to a great year of sharing even more of your stories and ideas on themes like food, shopping and traveling locally—wonderful opportunities for you, our readers, to recommend women to feature in all the communities throughout the Coulee Region. And to thank you once more for your readership and insights, we're even planning our first-ever “Reader's Issue,” filled exclusively with the stories you suggest to us. Look for more details in upcoming issues of *Coulee Region Women*.

Ultimately, it's you who put the “women” in *Coulee Region Women*, and we couldn't be more grateful. Thank you for your energy, for your comments, for giving us a reason to create this magazine. Who knew how wonderful it could be to serve you?

Who knew?

Betty

coulee region women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

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MODERN HEIRLOOM

An heirloom is described as something of special value handed on from one generation to another. Frequently it is a piece of jewelry, often with very special sentimental value, priceless to the one receiving such a gift. Touch of Class in downtown La Crosse wants to hear how you have given or received pieces of jewelry that are either an heirloom or will become one. Send them your story, by mail or email, and it will be entered in their Modern Heirloom contest. The winner will receive a Monica Rich Kosann Carpe Diem necklace (pictured here). Your letters must be received no later than December 20, 2011. The winner will be chosen by Monica Rich Kosann and announced on January 1, 2012. Please limit your letter to no more than 500 words, and send it to info@touchofclasslacrosse.com or Modern Heirloom Jewelry Contest, c/o Touch of Class, 312 Main St., La Crosse, WI 54601.



LOCAL CHICKS GET BIG PRESS

Andrea Poukey and Allison Krzych—the “Kick Chicks” to shoe shoppers who frequent downtown La Crosse—made a splash in national headlines recently when Women’s Wear Daily/Footwear News ran a story about their boutique, kick, in its October 24, 2011, issue, and then mentioned them again in a November 11 story on bridal shoe trends. “It has always been our goal for kick to be a nationally recognized company,” say Poukey and Krzych. “Our business model is unique in the shoe industry, and to be recognized in the industry magazine is our dream realized. It has already opened doors for us to grow our business and has deepened our connections within the industry.”

Writer Jacquelyn Lewis zeroed in on the success of Poukey and Krzych’s business savvy, especially in a small market and especially during an economic downturn. Their key to success is no secret to those who frequent the shop: They sell great shoes, they know their customers and they are an active part of the community. Say the Kick Chicks: “We value the communities we are a part of: the shoe industry, local, web and national.”

To read the story, learn more about kick or shop online, visit mykickshoes.com.



THE CELEBRATION OF A CENTURY

In 1912, founder Juliette Gordon Low imagined that Girl Scouts could be “the magic thread” that would connect girls everywhere, and since then, about 50 million women have been members of the Girl Scout family. Whether you’re a Girl Scout volunteer, the mom of a Girl Scout or fondly remember your own Girl Scouting days, you’ll want to be in on the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouts of the USA, a yearlong celebration taking place in 2012.

From January to December and from sea to shining sea, the nation’s Girl Scout councils will be celebrating a century of Girl Scouting with events and projects that make a difference. Our local Girl Scouts of Wisconsin–Badgerland Council will be no exception, with events planned May 5–6 in Madison that include a march to the State Capitol and a rally on Capitol Square, activities, speakers and an enormous slumber party. Badgerland Council CEO Margaret Henderson states, “We are very excited to welcome girls and adults from all over the country to celebrate how Girl Scouts has made and will make a difference in the lives of so many.”

Visit gsbadgerland.org for more information on participating in or volunteering for this event, as well as for information on joining Girl Scouts locally. Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

DAFFODILS IN WINTER

Daffodil Days are here, and the American Cancer Society invites everyone in to join in the fight against cancer. Dollars raised through donations received for daffodils support groundbreaking research, education, early detection efforts, advocacy and patient

services right here in the Coulee Region.

The daffodil is the first flower of spring. This symbol of renewed life offers a sense of hope to people everywhere, whether they are fighting cancer, remembering a loved one affected by the disease or simply wanting to participate in a wonderful program.

Daffodils can be ordered from a bunch of 10 up to a box of 500. Other arrangements are also available. Orders are being taken January 12 through February 21, and daffodils will

arrive during the week of March 11. More than 8,000 flowers are then delivered throughout the Coulee Region during Daffodil Days Week.

To get involved or reserve your flowers, call 608-783-5001 ext.101 or visit cancer.org/daffodils.



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Thank You FOR 10 YEARS OF TELLING YOUR STORIES

CRW staff dishes on how they do it.

Photos by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

Diane Raaum, Publisher

"Women love to communicate, read and learn from each other. I see my job as publisher as connecting women in the Coulee Region by sharing their stories. When someone agrees to let us publish their story, it shows they have faith in us and trust that we will tell their story accurately."

Betty Christiansen, Editor

"Everyone has a story to tell, and—with the help of our excellent authors—I seek to tell them well. Readers tell me they love *Coulee Region Women* because we feature women just like them; we keep it real. The hardest part of our job is choosing which stories to include. We have enough ideas to last us well into our next 10 years."

Claire Ristow-Seib, Sales

"I've lived in this community my entire life and I just love it. I'm a full-time nurse and do sales for the magazine part time; the rest of the staff calls me the 'community liaison.' I love finding out what's going on and bringing ideas to our planning meetings."

Sandy Clark, Billing

"One of the hardest things for women is to ask for what we need—whether in a job like billing or in everyday life. It can be challenging, but I've always approached this task with professionalism and understanding. You can be assertive while being kind and respectful. We extend this respect to all our associates."

Carol Schank, Sales

"How can we publish a complimentary magazine of such good quality? Our advertisers are the ones who make everything possible. We don't just solicit ads; we build relationships. Advertisers give us story ideas and keep us connected in the community. And it works—they support the magazine because it gets results."

Renee Chrz, Design

"A strong design speaks as loudly as words. Powerful images, typefaces and layout can convey a mood or set a tone. *Coulee Region Women* is one of my many clients, several of which are arts organizations and nonprofits. I'm honored to work on projects that make this community rich."



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WHEN WORK IS A *Party*

**Direct sales help women create
a job that fits their lives.**

BY SHARI HEGLAND
Contributed photos

Some love the flexibility. Others cite an opportunity to stretch their creativity and socialize with friends. Or it may be a convenient way to set aside money for a specific goal. Regardless of the company they choose or the reason they start, hundreds of women in the Coulee Region have found success in direct sales.

Home parties are the most recognized part of direct sales, which range from the longstanding industry leaders like Avon and Tupperware to those selling home décor, jewelry, personal care items, cleaning products and even “relationship aids.” Yes, there’s a home party for *that*.

According to the national Direct Sales Association, an estimated 16 million people are involved in direct sales across the country. Of those, nearly 82 percent are women, and most are between the ages of 30 and 65.

Full-time with flexibility

Trudy Swenson (pictured above) is among the 9 percent of direct sales entrepreneurs who have turned their direct sales business into a full-time income, working more than 30 hours per week. Formerly a

paralegal, the rural Mindoro woman began her career with Mary Kay Cosmetics when she realized that a nine-to-five job and long commute weren’t compatible with raising three sons, some with special needs.

Though she had anticipated always being a paralegal, for the last 13 years, she has instead been building a business of her own—one she can operate on her own time and own terms, but which still provides the income her family needs.

“It has allowed me to build a life, not just earn a living,” she says from the living room of her home. Just off one corner is a sun-filled converted porch that serves as her office, filled with awards from Mary Kay and a cabinet of products ready to be delivered to customers. Swenson also maintains her Image and Success Center in Onalaska, a space where she trains newer consultants and hosts skin care classes or wedding parties, both of which have helped her build a customer base of more than 400 customers around the country.

Swenson says she has built her business to the point of making an “executive salary,” but it requires commitment. She works 40 to 45 hours a week, but “I work it when I choose,” she says, balancing those



Stampin' Up! consultant Shari Ireland (center) helps Tanya Hanson (left) and Natalie Allen (right) as they create spiders to include on a Halloween scrapbook page.



Pampered Chef consultant Jennie Thomas uses proceeds from her sales to save for an international adoption.

hours around caring for her family, serving as a volunteer emergency medical technician and volunteering at her church.

"Having my business has allowed me to still be involved," she says, and she often takes her business with her, delivering orders to customers at her sons' football games or 4-H club meetings. "I intertwine my business with my family."

With a goal in mind

Jennie and Jaden Thomas of Onalaska are hoping to adopt a child from Ethiopia, but the process comes with a steep price tag, especially difficult since Jennie is the stay-at-home mom of two children already—Drew, 4, and Carissa, 2. Formerly a teacher, Thomas tried earning extra money for the adoption by working part-time as a tutor, but the hours meant she was always leaving the house at dinner and bedtimes, and it was hard to work enough to make it worthwhile.

When she hosted a Pampered Chef party as a fund-raiser for their adoption fund, she recognized an opportunity to help build those coffers without the schedule concerns. She has been selling the kitchen products for several months now.

"I'm able to plan it around my husband's schedule," she says. She only does two in-

home shows a month; the computer work necessary for her business can be done during her children's naptime. All of her income from Pampered Chef goes straight into the adoption account, Thomas says, and the parties also give her an opportunity to raise awareness about international adoption.

Once the adoption is paid for, Thomas sees herself continuing to work with Pampered Chef and putting the money into a dedicated account for something big: down payment on a house, new car or something similar.

"I like the idea of not having to rely on it (for basic needs), but it is nice to put (the profits) in there and see that account go up," she says.

Just for fun

Holmen's Shari Ireland was a career-oriented woman: a lead forecaster with the National Weather Service. And then she became pregnant with her first child, Bradley, who is now nearly 13. She and her husband, also a NWS meteorologist, worked rotating shifts, and only had two weekends together out of every 10 weeks.

"It took us the whole nine months to decide I was going to stay home," Ireland says, since her husband, Stu, handled the rotating shifts better than she did. Ireland had discovered rubber stamping before she

was pregnant, and about halfway through the pregnancy, she was invited to a Stampin' Up! party.

"It was crazy fun, and I decided this was going to be my outlet," she says. When Bradley was a baby, and later, when his sisters Sianna, 9, and Erika, 5, were infants, the stamping and scrapbooking supplies business was mostly a hobby, but other times, Ireland has filled her schedule with parties and clubs.

"It was more therapy for me," Ireland says. "It reconnects me with family and friends." And having the business helps support the costs of her hobby; it is her job to have a room full of the paper, inks, stamps and other materials she loves.

Ireland hosts a variety of clubs that meet at her home to scrapbook, stamp or create other projects. She has offered classes for kids and donates her time to help a volunteer group from her church make cards for homebound members.

"The money I make is reinvested back into my personal stamping and to buy gifts for Stu," she says. "For me, it's been more about relationships and making friends." *(crw)*

Freelance writer Shari Hegland enjoys the social aspect of attending home sales parties and can never seem to leave without finding something wonderful to buy.

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A MODERN-DAY *Mortician*

Jordan Wegner brings a woman's touch to the bereaved.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE
Contributed photo

Jordan Wegner has questioned her choice of profession only a couple of times. One was when she witnessed her first embalming; the other was when she faced moving a body, much larger than her own, alone.

"It wasn't that I wouldn't be able to move the body," says Wegner, funeral director at Jandt-Fredrickson Funeral Home and Crematory in La Crosse. "But the physical demands required of this job can present challenges at times, even if I do use some tricks to do it.

"But this is my life," says Wegner about some of the curiosities that come with the job. "I really believe it was what I was meant to do."

Called to comfort

When Wegner was in high school, her mother's fiancé was killed in a car accident. "At the time I wanted to study music, but seeing the support my mom got after the accident made me start thinking seriously about how I could be a comfort to grieving people," she says.

However, it wasn't until her family experienced a number of deaths that Wegner knew where her life was headed. "That's when it hit me," she says. "I remember telling my mom that being a funeral director was what I wanted to do."

At first, Wegner's mom was concerned that her daughter was experiencing a morbid reaction to the grieving their family had endured. "But once I shared that I felt it was more of a calling and not just a choice, she was okay with it," says Wegner. "For this line of work, you really need to have a special place in your heart."

A not-so-strange vocation

Until the Civil War, the care of the deceased was entrusted to women. As midwives and nurses, women were intimately familiar with life's stages, making it natural that those who devoted a lifetime of care to loved ones should be the ones who prepared bodies for burial.

However, due to the overwhelming number of soldiers who died far from their homes, families began to request that the bodies of their men be embalmed and transported from the battlefield.



Though initially viewed as an unorthodox practice, the realities of war made preservation acceptable, especially after the death of President Lincoln, whose body was embalmed and toured on a funeral train.

Undertaking slowly became a commercial enterprise, leaving the family parlor empty and alienating women, who were now deemed unfit for this type of work.

Resurrection of a role

Since then, women have reemerged as funeral directors. According to Wegner, approximately 60 percent of the students in her mortuary science classes were female, a statistic supported by the National Funeral Directors Association.

"I think it's because women are innately caring and compassionate that they are finding a suitable niche as funeral directors," Wegner says. "We're hard-wired to connect and build relationships, which is extremely important especially when families are asked to place their trust and faith in us."

And for 25-year-old Wegner, it's her care for the living as much as it is for the dead that keeps her grounded. "Yes, I'm a mortician," she says. "But being there to help people get through the process is what matters. I like to know that they are going to be okay." **(CW)**

Martha Keffe lives and writes in La Crosse. She enjoyed visiting with Wegner, who, contrary to stereotypes, is very personable and funny.



Decker's Floor to Ceiling Welcomes Dawn DuCharme

Interior designer Dawn DuCharme recently joined the sales team at Decker's. Most recently, she managed another local flooring store, where for nine years she provided her customers with her expertise and detail-oriented service. DuCharme is excited to bring her knowledge and creativity to Decker's while continuing to serve and assist her customers with all their interior design needs.

Decker's prides itself in outstanding customer service, professional installation and the largest showroom of floor coverings and fine cabinetry in southwestern Wisconsin. We are located one mile east of Valley View Mall. Please contact DuCharme at 608-783-5667 for your one-stop home project needs.



Mayo Clinic Health System Welcomes Jennifer P. Althoff, M.D.

Board Certified Family Physician Jennifer Althoff, M.D., has joined the Center for Women's Health at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse. Dr. Althoff is a graduate of the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Self Regional Healthcare Family Medicine Residency Program in Greenwood, S.C. Her special interests include women's health, reproductive medicine and natural family planning. Dr. Althoff is a FertilityCare Medical Consultant offering NaProTechnology medical services to women to help diagnose and treat gynecologic health abnormalities while sustaining the procreative potential. To learn more about the FertilityCare System and NaProTechnology, visit www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org. For an appointment, call 608-392-9891.



Gundersen Lutheran research scientist unveils new breast cancer finding

Gundersen Lutheran research scientist Qiangwei Fu recently presented her exciting breast cancer research finding at the Department of Defense's 6th Annual Era of Hope Conference.

Qiangwei Fu has been studying how breast cancer cells protect themselves against attack by the body's immune system. Using tissue samples in Gundersen Lutheran's BioBank, Qiangwei Fu discovered that when you remove the protective shield found on breast cancer cells (an anti-adhesion molecule called leukosialin), it's easier to destroy the cancer cells.

Future studies will examine whether breast cancer patients can benefit in the clinic setting. To learn more, visit gundluth.org/BioBank.

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CATERING TO THE

The Children's Museum offers a place to learn and play.

BY LEAH CALL • Contributed photos

"We do not cease to play because we grow old. We grow old because we cease to play."

—George Bernard Shaw

That quote appears on the wall of one of the Coulee Region's ultimate places to play: the Gertrude Salzer Gordon Children's Museum in downtown La Crosse. Since 1999, curiosity and imagination in children of all ages have been sparked through interactive play on its three stories.

Founder and executive director Anne Snow feels the museum has a special niche in the community. "Families are looking for quality time together, away from the distractions at home—mowing the lawn, the laundry, paying the bills. I think we have filled a need for a safe, fun, affordable place for families to learn and play together."

Snow began the planning process for the museum 15 years ago as a stay-at-home mom. The museum today draws record-setting numbers of visitors annually, with total visitors in 2011 expected to reach 79,000, up from 65,000 visitors in 2010. Most visitors are under the age of 8 and come to the museum with their families, child care centers, church groups and school groups.

The museum offers memberships ranging from \$45 a year for a basic two-person membership to a \$120-per-year "family passport" that includes admission to more than 420 science and youth museums nationwide.

Inspiring curiosity

Children are the most curious among us, and tapping into that curiosity is the number one goal at the Children's Museum.

It even runs a program throughout the summer aptly called Camp Curiosity, which feeds young imaginations through kid-focused themes like space, dinosaurs, bugs, superheroes, arts and crafts and more.

Snow sees a connection between curiosity and caring. "We care why children learn and how children learn, and we want them to care. We want them to be curious," she says. "It's great to see when they care enough to take that next step."

She hopes the curiosity that begins at the museum continues after children leave. "If they love the fire truck," she says, referring to the full-size fire engine on the main floor, "we hope their parents will go to the library and check out books for them about fire trucks and feed that curiosity."

"The beauty of the museum," Snow adds, "is that we have a lot of different things going on, and hopefully we have something for everyone."

Three floors of fun

Who couldn't have fun in 30,000 square feet full of imagination and surprises? On a typical visit, kids can see how high they can climb on a climbing wall, build a bridge over the mighty Mississippi and navigate a dinosaur maze. They can pretend to be a firefighter, discover what makes the Whoosh go whoosh, challenge their memory with Neos and pretend to be a Kwik Trip cashier. That and much more makes the Children's



Museum the place “where children play to learn and adults learn to play.”

Snow says they change and update the exhibits about every two months. “We try to strike a balance between having enough new to make people happy and not disappointing the children, because they like the same things, over and over and over.”

The museum’s traveling exhibits keep things new and fresh. A Clifford the Big Red Dog exhibit, based on the popular children’s books, is on display through December 2011. This traveling exhibit came at a discount rate because of the museum’s ability to be flexible. Says Snow, “We have a small board that meets once a month. We can make those decisions, and it doesn’t have to go through a trillion channels. And we are not scheduled so tight that we can’t just say, ‘Okay, let’s do it.’” Replacing Clifford in 2012 is a Wizard of Oz exhibit that will run January through April.

In addition to bringing in new exhibits, there is a constant focus on maintaining and adding to existing exhibits. That is most evident in the popular dinosaur exhibit. “We took an exhibit that we already had—the maze—and we altered it. We bought some used dinosaur items from another children’s museum, and we just kind of piecemealed together a

dinosaur exhibit,” explains Snow. “We really wanted it, because we look at our comments and suggestions, and that was number one: ‘We want dinos.’”

Community-supported family fun

Approximately 75 percent of the dollars needed to fund the Children’s Museum come from admission fees and birthday parties. Additional funding comes from endowments, local sponsors and the museum’s two annual fund-raising events, the Tri-Quest fitness challenge and the Big Muddy Run.

Area businesses also sponsor exhibits, such as the Kwik Trip store, fully stocked with kid-sized shopping carts, cash registers and plastic food. The interactive exhibit was designed, built and is maintained by Kwik Trip. “We like Kwik Trip because it is a local business that employs a lot of people and gives back to the community,” says Snow.

The Children’s Museum is committed to utilizing as many local goods and services as possible, and gives back to the community by offering discounted memberships for low-income families. “We don’t turn anyone away. We work with seven different organizations to make sure families in need know about our access program,” says Snow. “We give free passes to the Salvation Army, the women’s

shelter, children and family centers. We also have members buy memberships to donate to families in need.”

A great place to work

Two full-time and 15 part-time employees work at what could possibly be the most fun job ever. A large number of volunteers also help with day-to-day operations. Some have been involved with the museum since the planning stages. “We are lucky because we get to be creative. We get to use our imagination and do fun stuff,” says Snow, whose own daughter, who grew up along with the museum, is now among the staff.

The museum staff is admittedly curious themselves, and that curiosity transfers to the exhibits. Since many have children themselves, they draw on their own experiences, says Snow.

Museum employees’ days are filled with smiles, but “we see tears when the children have to leave. It’s a good problem to have,” says Snow. **(CRW)**

Westby-based freelance writer Leah Call remembers fondly the hours spent playing with her four kids at the Children’s Museum. She enjoyed the return visit to interview the woman who started all the fun!



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HELPING TO DEFEAT HUNGER

WAFER Food Pantry feeds thousands in La Crosse. Here's how.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Contributed photos

In the United States, one out of every 10 families doesn't have enough money to buy the groceries they need. In La Crosse, one of those people is Rose, a disabled adult; another is Stephanie, a single mom who just finished a two-year degree, but whose job doesn't pay enough to make ends meet; still another is Robert, a senior citizen on a fixed income. This year, WAFER Food Pantry will help 4,000 La Crosse area families have enough to eat. Some of those families will visit WAFER once, while some will require monthly assistance.

25 years of helping

WAFER is celebrating 25 years of providing groceries by way of monthly food packages (three to four days' worth of food with quantity based on family size). The pantry's organizers first met in

1985 and opened at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in January 1986; 3,000 food packages were distributed that year. Initially, WAFER stood for West Avenue Food Emergency Resource because of St. Paul's West Avenue location. In 2002, the pantry moved to its current Causeway Boulevard location but kept the original name and, in 2011, will distribute close to 20,000 food packages. While WAFER maintains a small half-time staff, volunteers keep the pantry running smoothly, assisting with everything from unloading trucks to helping clients.

WAFER also runs Senior Share, a program that, with the assistance of the La Crosse County Aging Unit and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, delivers food packages to nearly 200 senior citizens.

A community effort

WAFER maintains a no-questions-asked philosophy, so anyone can request food; almost every client registered, though, is near poverty level. In order to provide all clients with enough food, WAFER relies on donations of food and funds. A remarkable 80 percent of all food is donated from individuals, organizations and businesses. Other community members offer financial support, including several special young people who asked their friends to give food or money to WAFER in lieu of birthday presents. Additionally, WAFER applies for a variety of grants and maintains a United Way agency status. Remarkably, most funds are raised locally.

Finding food

Though most food is donated, WAFER also purchases food from local grocers, from a Feeding America food bank and from food vendors. Many donors wonder whether food or funds are the better gift and are usually surprised to hear that the answer is "both." Because of the vast quantity of food necessary

to provide clients with enough to eat, WAFER purchases pallets of items like soup, canned vegetables and pasta. Each month, nearly 7,000 cans of soup and 4,000 jars of peanut butter are placed in clients' hands. However, pallets of food tend to be of a single variety, like tomato soup. When food is donated, a dozen or more types of soup find their way onto the shelves. Clients are then more likely to find food suitable to their tastes.

If you're hungry

Getting food at WAFER is a simple process, requiring only a La Crosse County address and photo identification. Once registered, clients receive a milk coupon, then work one-on-one with a volunteer to choose a variety of nonperishable items from an established list. Additionally, clients help themselves to bakery, produce and dairy items as available. WAFER food can be obtained once each month. People over age 60 have the option of completing a food preference form for home delivery. Once each month, WAFER holds a Food Fair, in which a variety of food is distributed via Channel One, a Feeding

America food bank based in Rochester, Minn. Tickets for the event must be obtained in advance, though anyone whose household income is below 185 percent of poverty level is eligible, whether a WAFER client or not.

Looking forward

WAFER realizes simply providing food will not alleviate hunger. As research continues to link poverty and obesity, WAFER is searching for ways to increase the healthfulness of its offerings and incorporate small bits of nutritional knowledge into client visits. In an area like the Coulee Region, committed to all its residents, it's just a matter of time before our region is a shining example of the best way to defeat hunger. **(crw)**

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., has been WAFER's executive director since 2006. She thanks everyone who makes it possible for WAFER to help one out of every 12 area households.



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DEAR DOCTOR ...

Here's how to handle the health questions
you don't want to ask—but should.

BY KIM BRASEL
Contributed photos

Going to the doctor isn't necessarily a treat, and when you have questions that you don't really want to ask—whether you're embarrassed about the topic or fear the possible answer—it doesn't make the visit any easier.

But don't think your concerns are unique. Chances are, your doctor has heard them before, and the answers aren't complicated. Fortunately for women in this area, local medical facilities have women's health clinics that can help make bringing up those difficult topics a little easier.

Make yourself comfortable

Tiffany Gulinson, D.O., works in the Women's Health Clinic of Mayo Clinic Health System in Onalaska and says the clinic provides a comfortable environment where women are willing to bring up topics they may not in a general practice setting. "There really isn't much we haven't heard before, and we aren't here to judge; we are here to help," she says.

Oftentimes, Dr. Gulinson says she can sense when something is on a patient's mind and will bring up a delicate topic herself, such as incontinence or low sex drive.

"Vaginal discharge is one that comes up a lot. I'll run tests to check for certain things, but for most women it's normal," Dr. Gulinson says.

Another topic many patients are concerned about is vaginal dryness and pain during intercourse, an issue that can be uncomfortable to discuss, but which has solutions. Dr. Gulinson explains that women need to understand the physiological and anatomical changes that occur over time, and talking with your doctor about solutions is the best approach.

Most everyone these days deals with some level of depression or anxiety, and while many patients feel comfortable saying they are feeling depressed, they are less willing to confess to feeling anxious. "Again, it's another issue that has some fairly simple solutions that mainly include behavioral changes," Dr. Gulinson says. "Many



Tiffany Gulinson, D.O., Women's Health Clinic of Mayo Clinic Health System



Dr. Lisa Veglahn, Gundersen Lutheran Center for Women

women feel these issues are things they just have to learn to live with, and I want them to know that is not true. They just need to be willing to take that first step—talk with their doctor—and they will find answers that can make a world of difference.”

Incontinence is another tricky topic, says Dr. Lisa Veglahn, Gundersen Lutheran Center for Women, but it doesn't have to be something you have to learn to live with. While running, coughing or even laughing may cause some women to lose urine; others may feel a strong, sudden urge to urinate just before losing a large amount of urine. Incontinence can range from annoying to debilitating and can make everyday life miserable and cause tremendous emotional distress.

Dr. Veglahn says menopause can be another topic women choose to avoid, but that being informed on how to deal with it, what changes the body goes through and what treatment options are available will all improve quality of life.

Health and appearance

Helping women deal with sensitive self-image issues is the goal of Stephanie Andresen-Stevens, aesthetician, certified wellness consultant and owner of Brilliant Bodywork Massage Therapy and Skin Care in Onalaska. Whether she's offering weight loss solutions or hair removal, she strives to help her clients feel good in their own skin.

Weight loss is the biggest concern they have, one that wreaks havoc on self-esteem and well-being. “Our weight management program is medically supervised, and we discuss proper nutrition, mentorship and the lifestyle changes they will need to make,” Andresen-Stevens says. One of her clients lost 20 pounds and more than 34 inches in three weeks. “That client is no longer in the morbidly obese category and is now off all insulin. Given the proper tools, the body can heal itself.”

A free consultation is offered for all the services at Brilliant Bodywork, so if you are curious about a Brazilian wax (their most sought-after service), chemical peel or microderm abrasion, you can learn more about it and whether it's right for you. “We take the time to explain the process, ask about skin sensitivities and overall try to make it a very comfortable experience for

clients,” says Andresen-Stevens.

Kelly Sloan, aesthetician and electrologist with Forever Young Skincare, says hair removal is probably the issue that stands out as the most embarrassing for women to talk about. “Acne or wrinkles they will talk about with friends, but for a lot of women, unwanted hair growth is their deep, dark secret,” says Sloan.

Facial hair is the biggest concern, although the current trend is no hair anywhere. Methods of hair removal include waxing, laser removal and electrolysis, and which one is right for a person depends on her goals and budget. “Waxing is for clients who want the hair gone right now, but if the goal is permanent hair removal, then we use laser or electrolysis,” Sloan says.

Broken capillaries or age spots on the face or body are also treatable and not something you have to live with. “Redness is something we can treat very easily and can make a great difference in someone's appearance,” Sloan says.

“A lot of problems people have can cause them real frustration, embarrassment and anger, and they don't need to live with it. There's no need to fight that battle every day when we can fix it.”

Don't be shy

Dr. Veglahn emphasizes that a lot of issues have solutions, but your doctor can't help if you aren't willing to talk about them. To make the most of your visit, she suggests bringing in a list of questions regarding issues you would like to address. Doctors have their own list of things they need to ask in order to meet guidelines, but talking about a patient's own concerns first helps them prioritize. “I like to ask about their concerns right away, before I start asking my questions, and that establishes a good guideline for how the visit should go,” says Veglahn.

No matter your health concern, remember that your doctor can help, but you have to take that first step and ask. **(crw)**

Kim Brasel is a local freelance writer who lives in La Crescent with her family.

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SIX WAYS TO LIVE MORE COMFORTABLY

Sensible home improvement choices don't mean sacrificing comfort.

BY MAURA HENN
Contributed photos

What is your definition of home improvement? For some, it is energy efficiency; for others, it means adding wallpaper and lighting sconces. No matter what your definition is, here are some resources for basic improvement curiosities.

Energy wise

What is the best way to make your home more energy efficient while also saving money? Start with the Dairyland Power's Add Up Your Savings Tutorial (www.togetherwesave.com). You don't have to be a member of this Vernon County Energy Co-op to benefit from advice given at this website. Their interactive guide helps you find easy ways to save money by reducing your energy costs. For example, did you know if you install 20 compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs), you can save up to \$105 a year? Many other easy improvements include turning off lights, unplugging your television and sealing cracks in heating ducts, vents and doors. Take the steps and watch the savings add up.

Insulating properties

The proper amount of insulation is key to energy savings. According to Dairyland Power's website, having up to 15 inches of insulation in your attic can

save you approximately \$650 a year—but it isn't just about the amount of insulation, it's also about the right type for your home. Blair Hill, owner of Ultimate Insulation, suggests choosing Nu-Wool cellulose insulation for its many benefits. Nu-Wool is advertised as a 100 percent green product, being completely made from recycled paper. Nu-Wool is treated with sodium borate, a naturally flame-retardant compound often used in household cleaning products. The dense cellulose insulation greatly reduces the amount of oxygen present in your walls; combined with the borate treatment, Nu-Wool can even help prevent damage to your home in the case of a fire. If you are living in an older home and unsure of what insulation in the walls may look like, retrofitting may be done to help seal up empty pockets. Over time, insulation does degrade, most noticeably in your attic. If you have anything less than a foot of insulation, it may be time to consider adding to it.



Nu-Wool offers excellent insulating qualities plus flame retardancy.

High tech

Let's think about ways you could invest those energy savings into making your home work better for you. Heath DeBernardi, president of The Audio Video Pros in Onalaska, specializes in the latest in-home technology services. The AV Pros offers customized lighting systems using energy-efficient LED lights, as

well as home entertainment and audio systems. A home automation system from The AV Pros gives you control over heating, lighting, audio and home security from nearly any room in your home. With a streamlined wall-mounted touch screen, you can control the lighting and music in a single room, or turn all the lights on in your home with the touch of a button.

Surface appeal

Often, updating your kitchen to fit your needs starts with replacing countertops and cabinets. Lori Engelhart, a Certified Kitchen Designer with Wisconsin Building Supply, offers some great advice on this topic. If you are looking for more “green” options, Engelhart suggests bamboo or Lyptus wood, a plantation-grown hardwood that grows incredibly fast, making it an ideal renewable resource for floors and cabinets. Engelhart notes that darker colors, such as cocoa browns and grays, are the current style for cabinet finishes and stains. Laminate countertops are always affordable, but they may need to be replaced over time. As an alternative, Engelhart suggests DuPont Corian, a nearly scratch-resistant, nonporous man-made material. Corian is even suitable for bathroom sinks and countertops.

Looking for a more classic approach? Consider visiting Elegant Stone Products in Viroqua. Elegant Stone Products inventories 1,500 samples of stone, including granite, quartz, marble and recycled glass. Their wide selection ensures a unique countertop in any kitchen. When choosing stone for kitchen worksurfaces, consider qualities other than appearance. Granite, for example, is extremely durable as well as classic and beautiful.

What's underfoot?

When replacing carpet or flooring, it's worth educating yourself on current trends in comfort and sustainability. For environmentally friendly choices, Jeff Gerdes, owner of Coulee Carpet Center in La Crosse, suggests SmartStrand carpets that are partially made from fibers obtained from corn. Bamboo, increasingly popular as a flooring material, is a more sustainable choice than traditional woods.

Kathy Roth, owner and designer at Flooring Interiors in La Crosse, advocates a truly well-installed tile floor, which can last a homeowner a lifetime. If it is within your budget, consider



Corian countertops with a full-height covered backsplash are a practical yet attractive option for a kitchen makeover.

installing a heating system under your tile in the bathroom, which Roth says can make all the difference in the cold winter months.

Details matter

Finishing touches range from refurbishing a beloved piece of furniture, adding a wallpaper accent or installing a tile backsplash, and they can make all the difference in a comfortable, pleasing home. Nordeen Design Gallery in La Crosse (pictured on the facing page), whose own home décor resources include an extensive resource library open to the public, upholstery fabrics and wallpaper options, in-house framing and drape making, offers expertise in just these details. Kristin Boettcher, one of the gallery's designers, predicts the use of warm grays, deep purples, tangerine and golden yellow as color trends in 2012, while very current golds, greens and warm reds fill their current showroom. Boettcher adds that simply re-envisioning what you already have may offer just the fresh look you need. For example, she gave a guest bedroom a fresh look with simple white sheets and a new duvet. The biggest transformation was also the cheapest: a brass bed spray-painted black. As Boettcher says, “With a \$3 can of paint, I had an instant new bed.” (crw)



A romantic remake of a guest bedroom can be had with new linens and some black spray paint—the secret to a new look for an antique bed.

Maura Henn is a freelance writer and photographer living in La Crosse. She hopes to someday own a home that she too will improve.

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LA RENAISSANCE DU CHATEAU

Eva and Tim Ewers bring life back to the Mons Anderson mansion.

BY MELISSA HANSON

Photos by Bonseye Studios

Whether you know it as the Mons Anderson home or the Chateau, you are sure to recognize the gabled and mansard rooflines of the stone mansion and tower at 410 Cass St., La Crosse. As one of the city's most identifiable landmarks, the home's past is known, but its future was uncertain—that is, until Eva and Tim Ewers purchased the historic home and breathed new life into it as an authentic French restaurant.

Une histoire dans la pierre A history in stone

Although the mansion is Mons Anderson's namesake, he was not its first owner. The original structure (the east wing of the mansion) was a small cottage built by a stonemason from New York. In 1861, Mons Anderson purchased the cottage and soon began construction of the west and south additions, creating the opulent home that stands today.

Anderson was a Norwegian immigrant who settled in La Crosse at the age of 21. An enterprising young man, he first worked as a clerk in a local mercantile and soon purchased the business from his employer. Eventually, La Crosse's famed "Merchant Prince" even

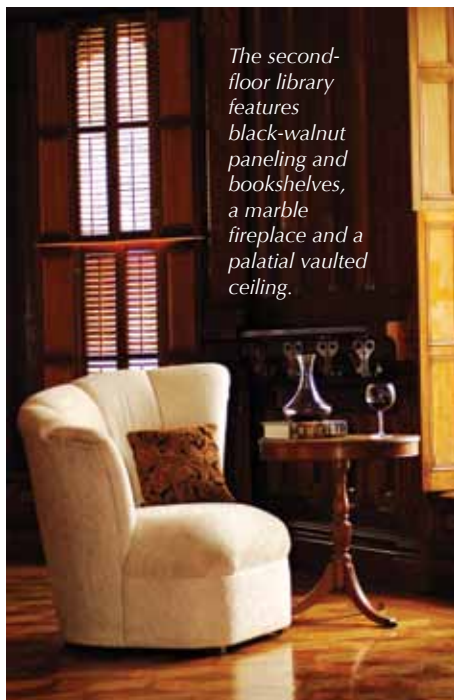
issued his own currency. The mansion's grandeur and location on La Crosse's most prominent residential street was a fitting testament to Anderson's successful entrepreneurship.

Since Anderson's death in 1905, the home has passed hands seven times. Besides being a private residence, the home has served as a clubhouse for the YWCA, a boarding house, a bed and breakfast and, now, a French restaurant.

Une affaire de famille A family affair

When Eva Ewers (a French native) and her husband, Tim (originally of Sparta), moved to the area from France, they set out to realize their dream of opening an authentic French restaurant. "Since the beginning," Eva insists, "we knew we were going to be a great team." With Tim's culinary experience and Eva's extensive knowledge of wine and the restaurant business, it was an ideal pairing.

The Ewers weren't looking for just any restaurant location, however. They knew they wanted a structure made of brick or solid stone and a location with a European feel; something with history was a bonus.



The second-floor library features black-walnut paneling and bookshelves, a marble fireplace and a palatial vaulted ceiling.



As a trained sommelier, Eva Ewers enjoys pairing French cuisine with wines from their all-European selection.

When Tim's brother first suggested they consider the Chateau, it had been on the market for some time and had begun to once again fall into disrepair. But one look at the Chateau, and the Ewers knew their search had ended. "It was the first place we looked at in La Crosse," Eva recalls, "and it was the only place we wanted to be."

Of course it wasn't just a business location the Ewers sought. The Chateau is also their home, their legacy and their children's future. Tim, Eva and their two children (plus one on the way) make their home in the carriage house just behind the mansion. While Tim



Tim and Eva Ewers welcome guests into their historic home and French restaurant.

labors in the newly renovated gourmet kitchen and Eva prepares the historic dining rooms for guests, the intricately parquetted floors of the Chateau are alive with the pitter-patter of little feet.

"It's the French way of doing things," Eva professes. And one day their children will likely work alongside them; at a young age, their son has already shown an interest in helping in the kitchen.

L'expérience **The experience**

Dining at Le Chateau is no ordinary dining experience. "What prides us here," Eva reveals, "is to be different. When you come here, it is like you're stepping out of La Crosse; it is like stepping back in time." From the moment you pass through the front gate with the Chateau's grand façade before you, you will feel transported. Entering the Chateau is a delight of the senses: With classical music and the subtle clanging of cutlery to china in the background, ornate finishes overhead and underfoot and the lovely Eva Ewers to greet you at the front entrance, you'll feel like a guest of Mons Anderson's come to call.

"It's really a blessing for us to be able to do what we do here and have people walking in our door," says Eva. "They really feel like they are coming to our house, and it's how we like it to be." With a keen attention to details, the Ewers and their small staff work to create a

unique experience for each guest.

Rêves pour l'avenir **Dreams for the future**

The arrangement of the home's 16-plus rooms allows for a variety of dining experiences, from intimate meals to corporate functions. Currently, the entire first floor has been furnished to seat 34 guests in three distinct dining areas that can be kept open or partitioned using original pocket doors.

Other rooms in the home that will soon be available for private events include the extravagant library on the second floor and the intimate third-floor tower room with unparalleled views. First on the Ewers' to-do list, though, is a wine room and lounge in the home's lowest level. "That's my baby," Eva, a trained sommelier, beams. The exposed brick walls and consistent temperature make it the ideal location for wine tastings, cocktails before dinner or appetizers after work.

One thing is for certain, in the loving and capable hands of the Ewers, the Chateau (now over a century-and-a-half old) has resumed its standing as one La Crosse's most cherished historic properties. **(crw)**

Melissa Hanson is proud that her own history intertwines with that of the historic mansion. She and her husband, Shawn, said their vows in the Chateau's library 11 years ago this December.

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CHOCOLATE: *A Love Story*

La Crosse's sweet obsession spans the centuries.

BY HEIDI OVERSON

Contributed photos

Recipes analyzed by Gundersen Lutheran registered dietitians

Mmmmm ... chocolate. The mere mention of the word sends warm, comforting sensations through many a woman. For many, chocolate is a consuming passion. It's been said that there are two responses to the question "Do you like chocolate?" "Yes," and "Oh, yes!" From the introduction of the cacao bean by the Mayan and Aztec Indians in A.D. 600 to the development of the Hershey Bar in 1900 to the many decadent forms of chocolate we enjoy today, one thing is certain—the world turns a whole lot easier thanks to chocolate.

La Crosse's love affair with chocolate

La Crosse's history is actually steeped in chocolate. The city witnessed a candy and chocolate boom at the turn of the last century, when merchants typically sold chocolate in their specialty stores. In the early 1870s, there were 12 of these specialty shops, mostly on Main Street and Front Street in La Crosse, and the number rose to 21 by 1878. Schreiber & Funke, a wholesale confectioner located at 122 Main St., was founded in 1881 and was the largest of its kind in La Crosse and in the state, west of Milwaukee. They boasted of fine Christmas candy and bakers' supplies. Another, Kratochwil, M. & Co. Confectioners, operated from 107 Front St. and manufactured and distributed fine chocolate, fruits and nuts. It was said there was

a "no more careful and conscientious manufacturer of candy in the country." Confectioners created and sold the treat while the public savored every concoction.

An abundance of chocolate shops

Today, La Crosse chocolate lovers are fortunate to have several places to go to satisfy their chocolate cravings. The Pearl at 207 Pearl St. offers hand-dipped, homemade chocolate treats such as (try not to faint) turtles, dipped Oreos, mint silks, "love food," a variety of fudge and much more, including a large selection of truffles and sugar-free chocolate treats. Since 1993, owners Terry J. and Michelle Peterslie have created an old-fashioned, cozy atmosphere that is a perfect setting for eating chocolate. The ice cream is homemade, as well, and if you go to sample any of the delicacies, make sure you ask about Oscar, the man largely behind the success of this classic candy shop.

Finnotte's at 417 Main St. is known for its large variety of treats and customer care. Many forms of chocolate beckon from the shelves. "The best sellers are the truffles and clusters," says owner Laurie Finn. "Dark chocolate treats are big sellers due to the amazing health benefits dark chocolate offers." Chocolate-covered, mammoth pecans and jumbo nuts and raisins sit prominently on a shelf, surrounded

by other chocolate concoctions, including the newly popular sea salt and dark chocolate-covered caramels. “Chocolate has the X factor,” says Finn. “There’s something about it that hits the mark and makes people feel good.”

Ranison at 706 S. 16th St. has been a southside neighborhood ice cream and candy hot spot since 1933. People come to browse the large variety of homemade, hand-dipped chocolate items. Nut clusters, love food, chocolate-covered nuts, caramels, pretzel sticks, truffles, and more—there’s enough to please every chocolate lover; Ranison offers more than 40 different types. There’s even homemade ice cream. Though the shop changed ownership in 1998, the new owner, Dave Edwards, has been committed in keeping Ranison the traditional ice cream and candy shop that has endeared many generations of La Crosse residents.

Northside La Crosse boasts the Sweet Shop, located at 1113 Caledonia St. The shop has been at the same location and selling homemade treats for more than 90 years. Candy is made the same way it was years ago—in copper kettles and with a 90-year-old Hobart mixer.

“We’re very proud of our chocolate selection,” says manager Chad Johnson. “Production is a very time-consuming, labor-intensive process, but our customers’ satisfaction makes it worth it.”

It can take two hours to hand dip a batch of chocolate meltaways, one of the Sweet Shop’s most popular items. Employee Shirley Stein sits on a stool in the dipping room, hands wrist-high in chocolate, patiently dipping candy pieces one by one.

Along with the turtles, chocolate-covered nuts, caramels and nut clusters, the Sweet Shop displays chocolate-covered creams, homemade Mallo Cups and chocolate-covered pretzels, caramel bars, orange peel, potato chips and bridge mix. They even sell what they call “No One’s Perfect,” a tray of their candy-making “mistakes.” Their biggest seller? “The all-famous, hand-dipped, chocolate-covered cinnamon sticks,” Johnson replies with a wide grin.

With so much high-quality chocolate available in the La Crosse area, there’s only one thing to do: rise up, go and collect, and eat to our hearts’ desire. It’s a hard job, but someone’s gotta do it.

FUDGE

Makes 64 pieces.

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- ⅔ cup evaporated milk
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 12-14 large marshmallows
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- ½ cup chopped nuts, if desired

Combine the sugar, butter, milk and salt, and bring to a boil over medium heat. Boil 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add the marshmallows, vanilla, chocolate chips and nuts, if desired. Pour into a buttered 9-inch pan and cool.

Per piece: 50 calories, 3g total fat, 1.5g saturated fat, 5mg cholesterol, 10mg sodium, 7g total carbohydrate, 0g protein (analysis includes nuts).



*“Forget love ...
I’d rather
fall in
chocolate.”*



RUM TRUFFLES

Makes 64 pieces.

- 1/4 lb. butter
- 1 12-oz. package chocolate chips
- 4 T baking cocoa
- 2 tsp. milk or cream
- 2-3 T rum
- 2 cups powdered sugar (or more if needed)
- Chopped nuts for rolling

Melt butter and chocolate chips over hot (not boiling) water. Remove from heat and add cocoa. Mix in milk, rum and sugar and beat until smooth. If too thin, add more sugar. Form into small balls with hands, and roll in chopped nuts. Set on cookie sheet and let harden in refrigerator.

Per piece: 60 calories, 3.5g total fat, 2g saturated fat, 5mg cholesterol, 10mg sodium, 8g total carbohydrate, 0g protein.

CHOCOLATE SCOTCHEROOS

Makes 24 pieces.

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 6 cups Rice Krispies cereal
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup butterscotch chips

Cook sugar and corn syrup in 3-quart pan over moderate heat until mixture begins to bubble. Remove from heat and stir in peanut butter. Mix in Rice Krispies and press into a buttered 9 x 13-inch pan. Let harden. Melt chocolate and butterscotch chips over hot (not boiling) water. Stir to blend and spread over Rice Krispies mixture. Chill and cut into bars.

Per piece: 240 calories, 11g total fat, 5g saturated fat, 0mg cholesterol, 140mg sodium, 37g total carbohydrate, 3g protein.

A self-professed chocoholic (though she sees no reason for rehab), Heidi Overson sampled and brought home a plethora of chocolate candies after returning from the research field for this story. Her family was delighted ... and there went Heidi's pre-holiday diet.

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10 Beaches to Dream On

This winter, warm your toes in the waters of these idyllic destinations.

BY CHARISH BADZINSKI

Photos by Charish Badzinski



Nice, France

As winter's grip grows tighter, and memories of beautiful days of summers past are vanquished, it's natural that we, as a people, sink into a deep funk that only that first thaw of spring can remedy. Yet with so much time between now and then, *Coulee Region Women* offers you an elixir that we hope will help you hang on until those sunny days return. So, turn up the heat in your house, ready the margaritas and get ready to mentally dig your toes into the soft sand of 10 great beaches.

1. Whitehaven Beach, Whitsundays, Australia

More than three miles of pure white, silica sand greet you when you disembark at this Australian getaway. This renowned eco-paradise has warm water so clear you can see stingrays watching tentatively from the bottom—and from a safe distance. Softer sand you may never find; guides will encourage you to shine your jewelry in it. Sure, you can hike the island for the view, but the beach is where it's at.

2. Pacific Beach, San Diego, California

The only stateside beach that makes this list, Pacific Beach is so low-key you'll have to find a new word for "relaxed." Expect miles of cool, powdery sand, a well-developed boardwalk and killer waves that make for great surfer watching. P.B., as the locals call it, is also a gorgeous place to watch the sunset before engaging in the area's vibrant nightlife.

3. Haad Tien Bay, Koh Phangan, Thailand

A hidden getaway in the Gulf of Thailand, this beach has enough unspoiled beauty to make up for the spoiling that's been done in other parts of the island. To get there, take a water taxi from the tourist-clogged beach town; the extra effort is well worth it. The bay gives way to a couple of resorts with modest, stilted cabins (check out the Sanctuary), a handful of restaurants with welcoming hammocks and a perfect little beach dramatically flanked by cliffs.

4. Cancun, Mexico

If you were cynical, you might point out that Cancun is essentially a man-made paradise built on the intention of getting you to part with your travel dollars. Of course, that's exactly why the beach is so great. They know what we love: long stretches of white sand, waves that break and foam over your toes as you walk the water's edge and turquoise blue water. No, you won't get a cultural experience here, but nobody goes to Cancun for cultural immersion, do they? They go for the beach.

5. Nice, France

If you like glamour, high-end shops and the European café culture, the pebbled beach along the Mediterranean Sea in Nice is perfect for you. Steps from the beach, you can sample the luxurious lifestyle



Cancun, Mexico



Haad Tien Bay, Koh Phangan, Thailand



Whitehaven Beach, Whitsundays, Australia

inherent to the Cote d'Azur and stroll the Promenade Des Anglais in your haute couture beachwear. If you're feeling frugal, get a baguette at a local *boulangerie*, some cheese from a *fromagerie* and the requisite bottle of wine, and claim a spot by the water for a seaside lunch.

6. Perissa Beach, Santorini, Greece

Jo Ann Buening, Certified Travel Specialist at Travel Leaders in La Crosse, recommends relaxing on this long black-sand beach, highlighted by the Mesa Vouno, a "mountain" rising from the sea to help protect from summer's Aegean winds. The place makes you feel as if you have been transported onto a movie set in the Greek Isles. Several *palapas*, where you can hide from the warm sun and just relax and take in the beauty of the area surrounding the beach, add to its appeal.

7. Palm Beach, Aruba, Lesser Antilles

Aruba's Palm Beach, a favorite of Travel Leaders Certified Travel Specialist Connie Johnson, is beautiful with crystal-clear perfect-temperature water year-round, pure white sand and gentle waves. In addition, the beach has a very gradual slope, thereby allowing you to walk out quite far in the water.

8. Trunk Bay, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands

With its picture-perfect setting—hills and lush foliage behind, islands in front and the most amazing clear turquoise water, full of colorful fish—this Travel Leaders recommendation is a setting particularly good to mentally "bring up" in living color on a blustery January day.

9. Kailua and Lanikai Beaches, Oahu, Hawaii

What makes these beaches truly special is the wildlife. Here, you will

find endangered sea turtles, dolphins, whales and many types of exotic tropical fish. It's also a kayaking adventure, say the Certified Travel Specialists at Travel Leaders, and there are offshore islets perfect for a picnic lunch, snorkeling or treks to natural pools or sea coves.

10. The windward side of Cozumel, Mexico

Far away from the resorts of Cozumel, the windward side of the island gives way to rough, unspoiled beaches—some littered with beach campfire debris, most just lazy sand dunes, abandoned in favor of resort life. Yet these beaches hold a special appeal for the free spirits among us. Rent a car and drive all the way to Mezcalito's, a bar that feels like it's on the edge of the planet. There, your most important tasks will be to order whatever beverage you like and to try to catch a suspended steel ring on a nail. It's important to set attainable goals, particularly when you're on vacation.

The opinions on what constitutes a great beach vary widely from traveler to traveler. Is it the scenery? The characteristics of the sand? The amenities? In the dead of winter, there's little need to nitpick. Just knowing there are places we could go—right now—for sunshine, sand and surf, is like a passport to sanity, even if we never board a plane.

But here's hoping we do. (crw)

Charish Badzinski is currently seeking employment with a company that wants her to fly to the great beaches of the world and drink margaritas, in perpetuity. She could be packed in 15 minutes. Make that 10. She dreams of travel at <http://rollerbaggodess.blogspot.com/>.

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THE BEST MEDICINE

Dr. Stuart Robertshaw—aka Dr. Humor—talks about the benefits of lightening up.

BY DIANE RAAUM
Contributed photo

You are a past educator and attorney; how did you become Dr. Humor?

I ran across a quote that said preschool children laugh or smile around 400 times a day, and adults over age 35 only 15 times a day. As I came from a very funny family and had learned the benefits of laughter, I thought I could share that knowledge with others.

Is that what made you establish the National Association for Humor Impaired, seeing so many people afflicted with a loss of humor?

Yes, because I realized that laughter and humor are therapeutic and so many people lack joy and appreciation of the richness in their lives. It was a way to dramatize the benefits of laughter, too.

How do you diagnose humor impairment?

Well, flunking the humor impaired test that you have to take for joining my association, for one thing. A lack of joy, reacting to life in a negative manner and an absence of focusing on the positive can all be signs that you need to lighten up a bit.

So how is laughter really good medicine?

Laughter increases blood flow, improves pain tolerance and improves mental functioning, including alertness, creativity and memory. Humor reduces stress, anxiety and tension; decreases

depression, loneliness and anger; and improves your mood. Laughter can be like a lollipop.

Your book *Dear Dr. Humor* shares stories from members of the National Association for the Humor Impaired. Why are these stories funny?

Readers can relate personally to the stories, as most are situational humor, not jokes. They are not offensive or lacking in good taste, either.

You have spoken publicly to different organizations in all 50 states. Have you seen that there is a universal need for laughter both in business and our personal lives?

Yes, laughter coupled with a focus on fun, humor and joy can have a positive effect personally. Businesses and organizations are now realizing the importance of developing strategies that increase fun in the workplace. Making work fun is no longer a taboo.

How do you know when you have crossed the line from being funny to being offensive?

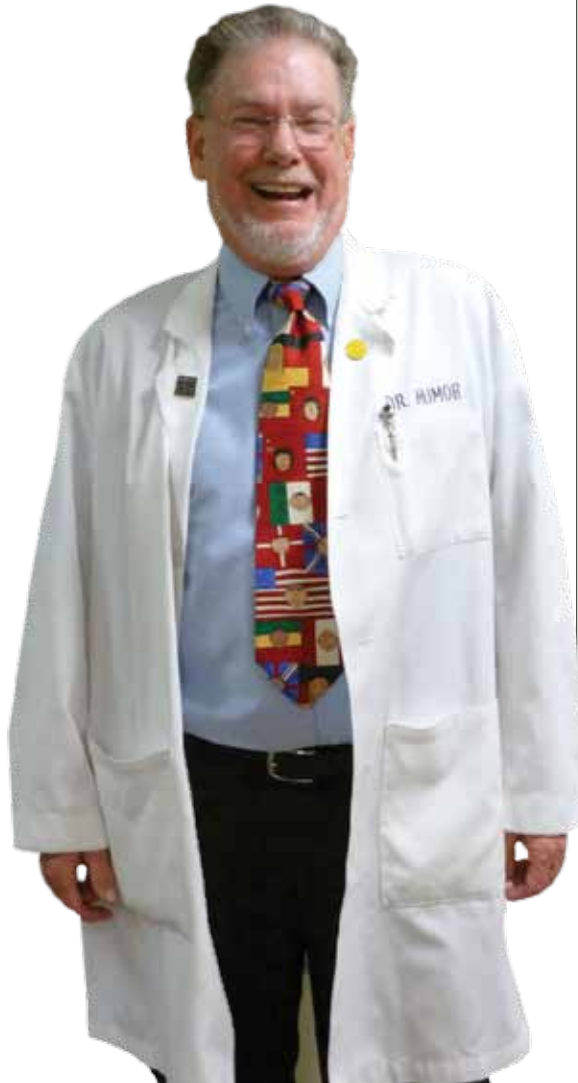
Positive humor is inclusive in bringing people together, and negative humor actually pushes people apart. When you feel hesitation in laughing, a sense of tension or anxiety, it is generally a clue that the line has been crossed.

Finally, what simple daily exercise can you recommend for women to strengthen their funny bone?

Since 10 percent of humor comes from organized humor such as jokes, and the other 90 percent occurs in our everyday lives, a social connectedness can occur from this daily interaction. Make a list of people that you identify with as your “laughter friends,” and as often as possible find time to include them in your life. When your laughter friends are unavailable, take time daily to laugh out loud for three minutes. Laughter is an aerobic exercise for both the body and the soul.

You can purchase *Dear Dr. Humor*, reserve Dr. Humor to speak at your organization or send him a funny story to obtain a copy of his humor-impairment test at www.drhumor.com. 

Diane Rauum, publisher of Coulee Region Women, enjoys laughter with her good friends on and off the magazine staff.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., 608-788-7439, www.aauw-wi.org.

Business Over Breakfast La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce

4th Wed. every month, 7:30-8:45 a.m. Preregister 608-784-4807, www.lacrossechamber.com.

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming:

Save-On-Sundays \$1.00 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

Mt. LeKid Climbing Wall open every Sat. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sun. 12-4 p.m.

Wee Move for ages 1-4 with parent, every Fri., 10:30 a.m.

Little Learners for ages 1-4 with parent, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

Coulee Region Autism Society for family members, friends and professionals who care for someone on the autism spectrum. 3rd Wed. of each month, Chileda Habilitation Institute, 1825 Victory St., La Crosse. 6:30-8:30 p.m. Child care available, call 608-519-0883. lax-autismgroup@centurytel.net or autismfyi-lacrosse@yahoo.com.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) meets the 4th Tues. of each month, Nell's City Grill, 1111 3rd St. S., La Crosse, 5:30 p.m. Madalene Buelow, 608-791-5282.

La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast meeting. 2nd Mon. of each month, 7 a.m., Radisson. Admission is \$5 and includes breakfast. www.lacrossechamber.com.

La Crosse Noon Wisconsin Women's Alliance meets the 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon. Dawn Harris, 608-782-4133, dawn@dmharrislaw.com.

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) meets the 1st Monday of each month, Olivet Lutheran Church, 6:15 p.m. Holly Zeeb, wxyzeeb@centurytel.net, www.olivetlutheran.org/small-groups/mops.

Valley View Kiddie Crew meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, Valley View Mall Food Court, 10:30-11:30 a.m., with fun and education experiences for children and parents. www.myvalleyview.com.

WAFER Food Pantry, Mon.-Fri. 10 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Mon., Tues., Thurs. 4-8 p.m. 608-782-6003. www.waferlacrosse.org.

Women in Networking and Support (WINS) meets the 2nd Wed. of each month, Piggy's, noon-1 p.m. Kay Buck, 608-791-9253, kay.v.buck@wellsfargo.com.

Women of Worth (WOW) meets the last Wed. of each month, Boot Hill Pub, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-784-2775, debbie.lee@westlandinsurance.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Dec. 1-31, Rotary Lights, 5-10 p.m. daily, Riverside Park, downtown La Crosse. www.rotarylights.org.

Dec. 1-4, *Comedy of Errors*, Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 2, Holiday Open House for jewelry and stained glass artist Kathryn Walker, 2-6 p.m., Grand River Station, 315 S. 3rd St. La Crosse. You can also visit featured artist Walker every Thurs. and Fri. Nov. 25-Dec. 23 from noon to 4 p.m. or by appointment, 608-792-4889.

Dec. 2-3, 9-10, Bling and Things jewelry and creative gifts sale, 5-9 p.m. Fri., 12-9 p.m. Sun., The Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 2-4, 8-11, *Shakespeare in Hollywood*, 7:30 p.m. 2-3 and 8-10, 2 p.m. 4 and 11, Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW- La Crosse.

Dec. 3, Boy Scout Overnight, 6 p.m. Sat. to 9 a.m. Sun., Children's Museum of La Crosse.

Pre-registration and pre-payment required. www.funmuseum.org.

Dec. 3, Holiday Craft Fair, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Cochrane Fountain City School, Hwy. 35 N., Fountain City, Wis.

Dec. 3-4, Bright Star Performance: *Handel's Messiah*, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Fine Arts Center, Main Theatre, Viterbo University.

Dec 3-4, 10-11, 17-18, 21-24, Charity Gift Wrap Service, JCPenney Court, Valley View Mall. Bring your gifts for wrapping, for a donation of your choice to a nonprofit organization.

Dec 5 and 12, Pet Photo Night with Santa, 6-8 p.m. 10% of photo sales benefit Coulee Region Humane Society. www.myvalleyview.com

Dec. 8-10, *Over the Hill and Through the Woods with the Three Boomer Breads*, 7:30 p.m., Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec 9-18, *The Last Christmas Gift*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre. www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Dec. 10, Jingle Ball holiday party, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse. www.funmuseum.org.

Dec. 16-17, Bill Miller, Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 26, Play Shoppe of Tomah, 9:30-11 a.m., The Parenting Place of Tomah, a shared time for parents, grandparents or other caregivers and their children to enjoy play, art activities, story time; registration not required. Contact Julee Katona at 608-374-4190 for more information.

Dec. 31, Countdown to Noon, 10 a.m.-noon, Children's Museum of La Crosse. www.funmuseum.org.

Jan. 13-16, Winter Clearance Sale at Valley View Mall. www.myvalleyview.com.

Jan. 15, Bridal World Expo, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., fashion show at 2 p.m., La Crosse Center. www.lacrossecenter.com.

Jan. 17, Bright Star Performance: *Moscow Festival Ballet's Romeo and Juliet*, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Main Theatre, Viterbo University.

Jan. 21-Feb. 1, Winter Rec Fest, La Crosse Area Parks, Medallion hunt, button design contest, skate party, etc. www.cityoflacrosse.com.

Jan. 22, *Family Series Performance: The Magic School Bus-Live!* The Climate Challenge, 3 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Main Theatre, Viterbo University.

Jan. 24, Yuval Ron Ensemble, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, Saint Mary's University, Winona.

Jan. 27-Feb. 12, *The Glass Menagerie*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre. www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Jan. 28, The 21st Annual La Crosse Great Tri-State Rail Sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., La Crosse Center. For more information call 608-781-9383.

Jan. 28, Taste of Onalaska, Onalaska Education Foundation fund-raiser, 6-11 p.m., Stoney Creek Inn, Onalaska. Tickets \$25. office@onalaskaeducation.org.

Jan. 29, Mardi Gras, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., La Crosse Center. www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

If your organization would like to be included in our Community Calendar, please contact us at editor@crwmagazine.com or call 608-783-5395.



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